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News

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SPOKANE SEMINAR ON FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 9, WILL BRIEF LOCAL GOVERNMENTS, PROGRAMS ON HIPAA COMPLIANCE

SPOKANE, Wash. -- A coalition of state agencies is sponsoring a free seminar for local government representatives in Spokane on Friday, November 9, to share information and experiences involved in complying with a new federal law that is changing the way health information will be handled in the future. Similar seminars have already been held in Yakima and Olympia.

The federal law is called HIPAA, which stands for the "Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act." Passed in 1996, the law came in response to complaints from the health-care industry that more than 25 cents of every health-care dollar today is wasted on administrative overhead, much of it caused by the more than 400 coding format systems in operation.

Spokane HIPAA Seminar
The free seminar will be at the Regional Health District Building, West 1101 College, from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Under HIPAA, the nation's entire health-care industry will move onto a single computerized form and coding system so that bills, claims and payments can be exchanged easily, quickly and cheaply.

The nation faces its first HIPAA deadline in October 2002, when all entities defined as health plans and providers under the law must adopt new computer codes and other transaction and system changes.

Ultimately, HIPAA will impact clinics, hospitals, and private insurance plans, as well as individual doctor's offices and many government social services such as drug abuse prevention programs, mental health care, and public health.

These changes will not only affect big payer systems like Medicaid, Medicare, Blue Cross-type plans and other health insurance companies and HMOs, but will reach down through every level of health care, including local government programs and agencies.

The next HIPAA deadline comes in April 2003, when new privacy rules go into effect, making sure that confidential medical records – even though more easily accessible in an electronic age – are adequately secure and protected against improper disclosure.

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The November 9 seminar will be held at the Spokane Regional Health District Building, West 1101 College St., from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. The seminar will outline the requirements of the federal law and give local program representatives a basis for beginning their own compliance efforts. Sessions will include detailed discussions of the major HIPAA rules on transactions and privacy, as well as a third area, security. The latter rule is still being finalized, although a draft is circulating now.

The event is free and open to anyone with a HIPAA interest. Pre-registration is requested only to make sure that enough materials are on hand for participants. Information about the seminars, including the curriculum, is available on the Internet at <http://maa.dshs.wa.gov/dshshipaa>

To register, participants can simply call Jim Stevenson at (360) 902-7604 or e-mail him at steveh2@dshs.wa.gov

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HIPAA BOOKMARK:

ON THE INTERNET: A Washington state Internet page is open to both public and private segments of the health-care industry with an interest in HIPAA. The site includes a wealth of HIPAA information, including updates, assessment tools, backgrounds, questions and answers, and links to other HIPAA sites around the country. The page is available at <http://maa.dshs.wa.gov/dshshipaa>